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FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2187
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3072
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL
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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3415
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2801
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP

UNCLAS BISHKEK 000464

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN AND SCA/PPD

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: Kyrgyz Election Commission Warns Newspapers over Coverage of Opposition Meeting

Ref: Bishkek 408

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¶1. (SBU) Kyrgyzstan's Central Election Commission (CEC) issued warnings to four opposition newspapers over their coverage of the April 25 Congress of the United People's Movement (UPM), at which the UPM endorsed former Prime Minister Almaz Atambayev as the unified opposition candidate for the July 23 Presidential election (reftel). The CEC alleged that the press coverage of the opposition's meeting constituted "early agitation" prior to the official campaign period.

¶2. (SBU) The May 1 Congress of the ruling Ak Jol Party, which saw incumbent President Kurmanbek Bakiyev nominated as the Party's candidate for the July 23 election, received wide coverage in the government press, including on state television news broadcasts.

¶3. (SBU) On May 12, opposition newspaper "Achyk Sayasat" reported that the CEC had orally admonished four newspapers, warning them to abstain from "early agitation campaigning." (Note: We confirmed this report with another affected newspaper and with the CEC directly. End Note.) The affected newspapers are: "Achyk Sayasat," "Uchur," "Apta," and "Reporter Bishkek." At a May 7 session of the CEC, Chairman Damir Lisovskyi alleged that the four newspapers violated Article 30 of the Election Law, which regulates election media campaigning. He specifically cited the newspapers' coverage of the April 25 Kurultai (Congress) of the United People's Movement.

¶4. (SBU) In its May 12 edition, "Achyk Sayasat" commented that coverage of the opposition Kurultai was not illegal, since the Election Law only applies to official candidates who have been certified by the CEC, and no candidates have yet been certified. The newspaper also pointed out that government-owned and pro-governmental media covered the pro-presidential Ak-Jol Party Congress without comment from the CEC.

GFOELLER